

Foreign Media Analysis

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WEST EUROPEAN PAPERS CALL MOSCOW "THE GOOD ATMOSPHERE SUMMIT"

This analysis is based on USIS reporting of the major press of Western Europe, covering May 24 - June 9, 1988. It analyzes 200 editorials and staff commentaries on U.S.-Soviet relations appearing in 74 papers from 11 countries.

A majority of the West European papers concluded that the Moscow Summit produced a better atmosphere and a more confident climate and that U.S.-Soviet relations are now "on track." They said a willingness to continue a U.S.-Soviet dialogue despite remaining differences contributed to a relaxation of tensions. Italy's centrist Stampa Sera was typical: "Keep negotiating: this is the philosophy and substance of the new relationship."

The papers had not anticipated major results from the Summit. Even suggestions that a START treaty would not be signed by the end of the President's term did not upset a majority of the papers. Instead, these papers credited both leaders with establishing a stable relationship that would enable the signing of important agreements whenever both sides are ready. The papers said the Summit's atmosphere made the world a little more secure, predictable and crisis-proof.

The President's stress on human rights brought comments from roughly half of the papers. One-third of these said it irritated Gorbachev and was not helpful in his struggle to consolidate power. Two-thirds approved of the President's emphasis on human rights, noting that human rights form the real foundation for East-West relations.

After months of poor press in Western Europe, a majority of the papers gave President Reagan high marks for his flexibility in dealing with the Soviet Union. A few papers credited the President's policies in helping to bring about changes in the USSR. Conservative Figaro of France said: "While it is undeniable that the USSR is changing, it is also true that the firmness displayed by the U.S. President at the beginning of his reign strongly contributed to the change."

A third of the papers expressed caution about dealing with Moscow. They said mistrust is still firmly rooted and the USSR is still a totalitarian dictatorship. Independent Diario de Noticias of Portugal said: "Let us be realistic: Soviet society is what it is, and it will not change, not in a day, not in a generation."

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